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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 0379
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3501
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1661
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2697
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001033

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: CHINESE AMBASSADOR AGREES MAOISTS HAVE NOT
CHANGED THEIR STRIPES, DISCUSSES TIBET

REF: BEIJING 3171

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) The Maoists have not given up violence and intimidation, agreed Chinese Ambassador Zheng Xianglin in a May 23 meeting with the Ambassador. The two Ambassadors also discussed splinter ethnic groups in the Terai, their potential impact on elections, and the Maoist reaction to these groups. Ambassador Zheng hinted that Tibetan resettlement, if done quietly and in small numbers, might be a possibility as long as the Government of Nepal (GON) understood China's position and Tibet's stability was not under threat.

Maoists: In Government, Yet Still Violent

12. (C) Chinese Ambassador Zheng Xianglin initially posited in a meeting May 23 that the Maoists wanted to join the political mainstream, but concurred with the Ambassador that they continued to engage in violence and intimidation even after their entry into the interim government. The Ambassador pushed Zheng to admit that Maoist actions, including abuses by the Young Communist League's (YCL), signaled that the Maoists had not abandoned their violent past. The Ambassador stressed to Zheng that there were only two positions within the Maoist ranks: first, those who argued for absolute power by remaining inside the government while maintaining pressure on the government from the YCL and others on the outside, and second, those who argued it was better to leave the government and gamble all on direct confrontation. There was no third Maoist position of following the rules and gaining power solely through the electoral process and by peaceful means.

Ethnic Groups Fight for Representation

13. (C) The growing power of ethnic groups in the Terai (Nepal's southern borderlands with India) and their continued

fight for representation in the government seemed to surprise Zheng. The Ambassador stated that inclusive ethnic representation remained a key issue for Nepal's ongoing peace process and for fair and free elections. The Maoists appeared afraid of the potential power of formerly loyal Maoist ethnic liberation fronts, which were splintering and cutting into Maoist influence in the populous Terai. A good chunk of Madhesi Maoists had already split from the party and there were reports of similar pressures building among Tharu and Magar Maoists. This would create the potential for additional conflict. The GON needed to include these groups in the political process to avoid a potential splintering of Nepal. Zheng hoped the Ambassador was being alarmist, but concurred that neither a failed state nor a fractured country were in the region's interest.

Tibetan Resettlement Possible?

¶4. (C) Zheng raised the issue of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. In a frank conversation, Zheng implied that limited resettlement to the United States might be possible, but cautioned that large and public resettlement plans were not a viable option. He emphasized the importance of a stable Tibet and the potential fallout of a large refugee resettlement plan, particularly in encouraging outward migration from Tibet. The Ambassador assured Zheng that the U.S. viewed Tibet as a part of China and sought to assist Tibetans who were stranded in Nepal, not create a new wave of migration.

Comment

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¶5. (C) Ambassador Zheng appeared to start his May 23 meeting with a rosier view of the Maoist intent to join the mainstream than the one he ended with. He ended up acknowledging that the Maoists had shown no indication of changing their violent ways since joining the government seven weeks ago. Zheng made the usual disclaimer that China's role was that of an observer, but added that China had not yet established official relations with the Maoists. Zheng did not appear to have devoted much time to the Terai and the issue of ethnic separation. Most surprising were his comments about Tibetan refugees. While we would not advise reading too much into his remarks, we will continue to explore with the Government of Nepal the option of quietly resettling a few Tibetans.

MORIARTY